

**West Wing connections**  
Policies in Focus

- [National Security](#)
- [Homeland Security](#)
- [Economic Security](#)
- [More Issues](#)
- [En Español](#)

**News**

- [Current News](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Press Briefings](#)
- [Proclamations](#)
- [Executive Orders](#)
- [Radio Addresses](#)

**News by Date**

- [March 2003](#)
- [February 2003](#)
- [January 2003](#)
- [December 2002](#)
- [November 2002](#)
- [October 2002](#)
- [September 2002](#)
- [August 2002](#)
- [July 2002](#)
- [June 2002](#)
- [May 2002](#)
- [April 2002](#)
- [March 2002](#)
- [February 2002](#)
- [January 2002](#)
- [December 2001](#)
- [November 2001](#)
- [October 2001](#)
- [September 2001](#)
- [August 2001](#)
- [July 2001](#)
- [June 2001](#)
- [May 2001](#)
- [April 2001](#)
- [March 2001](#)
- [February 2001](#)
- [January 2001](#)

**Appointments**

- [Nominations](#)
- [Application](#)

**Photos**



- [Photo Essays](#)

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [March 2003](#)

[Printer-Friendly Version](#)

Ar Rutbah **Operation Iraqi Freedom** BAGHDAD

For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
March 19, 2003

**President Bush Addresses the Nation**

The Oval Office

10:16 P.M. EST



**VIDEO** Multimedia  
 President's Remarks  
[view](#)  
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THE PRESIDENT: My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.

On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign. More than 35 countries are giving crucial support -- from the use of naval and air bases, to help with intelligence and logistics, to the deployment of combat units. Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honor of serving in our common defense.

To all the men and women of the United States Armed Forces now in the Middle East, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you. That trust is well placed.

The enemies you confront will come to know your skill and bravery. The people you liberate will witness the honorable and decent spirit of the American military. In this conflict, America faces an enemy who has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality. Saddam Hussein has placed Iraqi troops and equipment in civilian areas, attempting to use innocent men, women and children as shields for his own military -- a final atrocity against his people.

I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm. A campaign on the harsh terrain of a nation as large as California could be longer and more difficult than some predict. And helping Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country will require our sustained commitment.

We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people.

I know that the families of our military are praying that all those who serve will return safely and soon. Millions of Americans are praying with you for the safety of your loved ones and for the protection of the innocent. For your sacrifice, you have the gratitude and respect of the American people. And you can know that our forces will be coming home as soon as their work is done.

Our nation enters this conflict reluctantly -- yet, our purpose is sure. The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. We will meet that threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard

A DECADE OF DEFIANCE  
**IRAQ UPDATE**

- [A Vision for Iraq](#)
- [Why We Know Iraq is Lying](#)
- [U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council](#)



**Federal Facts**

- [Federal Statistics](#)

**West Wing**

- [History](#)

and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of fire fighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities.

Now that conflict has come, the only way to limit its duration is to apply decisive force. And I assure you, this will not be a campaign of half measures, and we will accept no outcome but victory.

My fellow citizens, the dangers to our country and the world will be overcome. We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail.

May God bless our country and all who defend her.

END 10:20 P.M. EST



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[History & Tours](#) | [Kids](#) | [Your Government](#) | [Appointments](#) | [Contact](#) | [Text only](#)

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